



**UK International
Development**

Partnership | Progress | Prosperity



DARE-RC

DATA AND RESEARCH IN EDUCATION
RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

جراتِ تحقيق ملے

DARE-RC Programme Inclusivity Report: Findings from Provincial Engagement

June 28th, 2024



Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
List of Abbreviations	2
1 Introduction.....	3
2 Background.....	4
3 Inclusivity in Pakistan - Situation Analysis.....	6
3.1 Education Policies and Sector Plans.....	6
3.2 Province-wise Status of Provincial Groups.....	7
4 Introduction: Provincial Engagement Meetings	13
5 Provincial Discussions: What We Learnt.....	15
5.1 Pathways to Inclusivity	15
5.1.1 Policy Development and Implementation	16
5.1.2 Curriculum and Textbooks	17
5.1.3 Teachers and the Learning Environment	18
5.1.4 Access to Technology	20
5.1.5 Provision of Infrastructure	20
5.1.6 Advocacy and Awareness-Raising	21
5.1.7 Group Activity: Design a Child's Future	22
5.2 Perspectives of Various Marginalised Groups.....	24
5.2.1 Persons with Disabilities	25
5.2.2 Women	28
5.2.3 Transgender Persons	28
5.2.4 Adherents of Diverse Faiths	30
5.2.5 Other Forms of Exclusion	32
6 Way Forward.....	33
6.1 Advocacy Group for Policy Engagement.....	33
6.2 Capacity Strengthening	33
6.3 Policy Engagement.....	34
6.4 Communication	34
Annex A: Group Activity Template	35
Annex B: List of Government Officials	36
Annex C: List of Discussion Participants	38

List of Abbreviations

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
CS	Capacity Strengthening
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DARE-RC	Data and Research in Education - Research Consortium
EMIS	Education Management Information System
E&SED	Elementary & Secondary Education Department
GB	Gilgit Baltistan
IE	Inclusive Education
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NOC	No Objection Certificate
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEPD	Department for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities
ESP	Education Sector Plan
IES	Inclusive Education Strategy
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NTS	National Testing Service
OOSC	Out of School Children
PEF	Punjab Education Foundation
PESP	Punjab Education Sector Plan
PIE	Pakistan Institute of Education
PSL	Pakistan Sigh Language
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SELD	School Education and Literacy Department, Government of Sindh
SEP	Special Education Policy
SpED	Special Education Department
STI	Sexually Transmitted Illnesses
TEACH	Teach Effectively All Children
TG	Transgender
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WWD	Women with Disabilities

1 Introduction

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens, regardless of their religion, caste, or creed. Article 20 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, while Article 25 prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Furthermore, the right to education is defined in Article 25-A in that "the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 5-16 years in such a manner as may be determined by law". However, the ground realities in the country paint a different picture regarding the provision of these rights and protections to citizens.

The Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) reports over 26 million out-of-school children (OOSC) nationwide, with a provincial breakdown given in the figure below.¹ Furthermore, data from Gilgit-Baltistan's (GB) Education Management Information System (EMIS) reveals an additional 125,894 OOSC in that region.

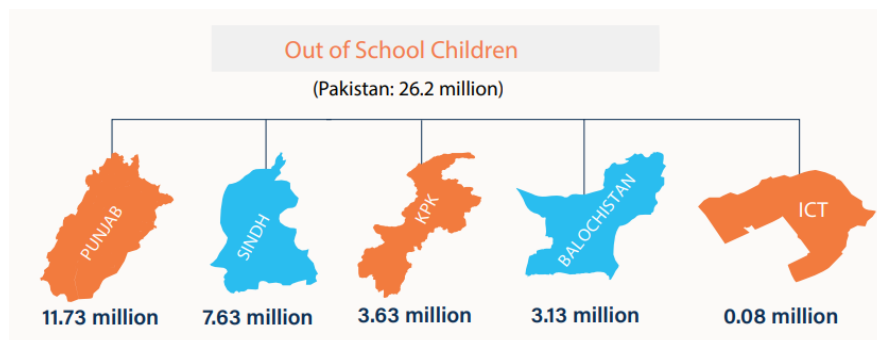


Figure 1: PIE - Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-2022 Highlights Report

Pakistan's legal framework including the constitution, laws and policies, lacks a clear definition of inclusive education (IE). As a result, most of the educational strategies lack the consideration of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, ethnicity/ religion, disability, and economic background. The limited categorisation of children with disabilities further restricts their access to quality education. Another challenge is the lack of necessary resources and teacher training on matters related to IE. However, the core of all the challenges remains "lack of regular, credible, and holistic data pertaining to different vulnerable groups in general and CWDs in particular".²

¹ <https://pie.gov.pk/Sitelimage/Downloads/PES%20Highlights%202021-22%20New.pdf>

² <373669eng.pdf> (unesco.org)

2 Background

Inclusivity is a cross-cutting area of the DARE-RC programme. It is reflected in all programme workstreams including Research, Capacity Strengthening, Grants Awarding, Policy Engagement, and Communications.

Inclusivity is defined as the process of improving the participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic status, through improved opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.

The term 'marginalised' refers to individuals and groups pushed to the peripheries of community life, social services, opportunities, and resources. This exclusion is on the basis of disability, gender, faith, and ethnicity/provincial affiliation.

Inclusivity across the workstreams will be ensured through the use of workstream-specific checklists, capacity strengthening measures, as well as an Advocacy Group comprising of an inter-provincial group of activists working with marginalised communities.

INTEGRATION OF INCLUSIVITY IN DARE-RC PROGRAMME WORKSTREAMS

RESEACH/GRANTS

- Inclusive Research Agenda
- Selection of Grantees
- Inclusive Research Design: Diverse Teams & Tools Sensitive to Marginalised Groups' Needs

COMMUNICATION

- Accessible Products that Reach a Diverse Audience
- Diverse Focus Areas and Voices Represented in Products

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

- Selection of Diverse Participants
- Equitable Engagement with Participants
- Inclusivity Training of Researchers and Users of Research
- Capacity Strengthening of Consortium Partners

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

- Inclusivity Angle in Policy Engagement Dialogue
- Role of Marginalised Groups Represented in the Engagement

Tools and Platforms:

- 1 Inclusivity Checklists
- 2 Inter-Provincial Advocacy Group
- 3 Capacity Strengthening Design and Content

Summary of Inclusivity Embedded in DARE-RC Programme Workstreams

The key ways in which Inclusivity has so far enriched the DARE-RC programme and will continue to do in the future are described below:

- The thematic focus of the **DARE-RC Research Agenda** is on marginalised groups including girls, children with special education needs and disabilities, children from religious minority communities, as well as those impacted by climate change and other disasters. Input from the Inclusivity workstream has further ensured that in

addition to the agenda, the research design incorporates diverse research teams and data collection tools that are sensitive to the needs of marginalised groups.

- The **Grant Awarding** process and documents embed Inclusivity through, the 'Call to Grants' advertisement for print media, the concept note, and proposal review rubric.
- In the **Capacity Strengthening** measures, the Inclusivity Team encourages not only the inclusion of participants from diverse faiths and women, but also provides on-the-spot feedback to facilitate meaningful participation from these groups. Training sessions on Inclusivity will also be conducted for researchers, users of research, as well as for the DARE-RC consortium partners.
- **Communications** products will be reflective of diverse and marginalised groups, showcasing their issues and using their own voices. Balanced representation of persons and information from each province/area will also be ensured.
- At the **Policy Engagement** level, the Inclusivity Lead will participate in the ensuing dialogue. The Advocacy Group comprising of activists and academicians working with marginalised groups will also partake in this dialogue.
- The Inclusivity Team engaged with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and government departments working on the problems faced by marginalised communities. The purpose was to a) understand their perspective on the inclusion of their respective communities in education and b) disseminate information garnered through this engagement during the Capacity Strengthening sessions.

3 Inclusivity in Pakistan - Situation Analysis

This section summarises the approach of each provincial government towards inclusivity, as represented in their Education Sector Plans and Education Policies, followed by a situation analysis of groups marginalised on the basis of gender, faith and disability.

3.1 Education Policies and Sector Plans

The *Balochistan Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2020-2025*, aims to ensure that all standards embed inclusiveness, addressing gender, children with special needs, and diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The plan specifies that "Inclusiveness will be implemented in the classroom through the standards notified for teaching to ensure it is part of the teaching-learning process in the classroom."³ Even though IE was a part of previous education policies and plans, it remained a low priority in practice.

The gender gap in Balochistan remains significant, making female inclusiveness a key focus area, in terms of both enrolment and gender-inclusive management. With regards to CWD, the Directorate for Special Education under the Social Welfare Department oversees 11 institutions across 9 districts. While one institution has been experimenting with inclusiveness, the others are dedicated for CWD. Overall, the plan emphasizes that all "quality products (curriculum, textbooks, teachers, assessments and examinations, and teacher training) require a review of their current standards for inputs and processes" to ensure that standards are inclusive.⁴

The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ESP 2020-2025*, commits that the Elementary and Secondary Education Department (E&SED) will take steps to support the education of all children with special needs between the ages of 4-16 years. "A survey will be undertaken to identify the requirement for assistive devices for special needs children enrolled in E&SED schools at primary and secondary levels. Based on the survey findings, students will be provided such devices where their absence is a clear barrier to attending school. Resources are to be re-allocated to support the design and notification of quality standards for special and inclusive education, supply and training of teachers; materials development; infrastructure development in schools; and provision of school supplies."⁵

A new module on inclusive education has been added in the teacher induction programme. The ESP provides an opportunity for the government to improve resources, priorities around inclusive education, and to facilitate the enrolment of children with disabilities, with refugee status, and those from diverse religious backgrounds.⁶

The *School Education Sector Plan and Roadmap for Sindh (2019-2024)* aims to "improve formal and non-formal student curriculum with a focus on local needs and global trends, inclusive education and life skills, gender equality, cultural diversity, and citizenship".

³ [Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020-25 \(unesco.org\)](https://unesco.org)

⁴ [Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020-25 \(unesco.org\)](https://unesco.org)

⁵ [download \(globalpartnership.org\)](https://globalpartnership.org)

⁶ [download \(globalpartnership.org\)](https://globalpartnership.org)

Furthermore, it is mentioned that a strategy must be developed to train teachers in IE. "The School Education and Literacy Department, Sindh (SELD) will propose a coordination mechanism with the Special Education Department to develop a plan to mainstream differently-abled children into formal schools. In addition, the coordination mechanisms will enable the development of a module on IE and the organisation of awareness sessions for teachers in primary schools to recognise different forms of special needs among students, seek guidance, and facilitate an inclusive learning environment."⁷ SELD has developed an inclusive education module that is currently being used to train teachers.

The *Gilgit Baltistan Education Strategy 2015-2030*, aims to integrate inclusive education in mainstream schools wherever possible as well as establishing special education centres for learners who cannot be integrated into mainstream education due to severe disabilities. Gilgit Baltistan has not had an inclusive education policy earlier and also lacked the facilities needed to educate those with disabilities. But according to the recent strategy the government intends to establish at least one fully resourced centre in each tehsil, with boarding and/or transport facilities. Furthermore, teachers will be trained and institutions will be designed/modified to accommodate children with disabilities. Also, the aim is to create a conducive learning environment and curriculum which is responsive to the needs of children with disabilities as well as to formulate policies and systems to attract people to work in special educational centres.⁸

The *Punjab ESP 2019-2024*, aims to "ensure free and compulsory, universal, equitable, and inclusive education for all children; at all educational levels including NFE, TVET, and lifelong learning; with particular attention to children with special needs, marginalised groups, and OOSC; creating safe, protective, and enabling learning environments". Although there is still room for improvement, Punjab has made more progress in the realm of special education than other provinces in Pakistan. The government has recently transferred ownership of inclusive education to the Special Education Department, which means that in the future, "education officials at the provincial and district levels will be accountable for ensuring that schools are inclusive for children with mild disabilities. This includes improving staff competencies and attitudes, student sensitisation, infrastructure and accessibility, and teaching and learning content".

The Special Education Department currently runs 303 institutes, centres, colleges and vocational institutes. Additionally, it is conducting some pilot projects on IE with the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) aimed at integrating children with mild disabilities into mainstream schools.⁹

3.2 Province-wise Status of Provincial Groups

This section captures the status of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, faith and disability.

⁷ [download \(globalpartnership.org\)](#)

⁸ [Background \(unesco.org\)](#)

⁹ [download \(globalpartnership.org\)](#)

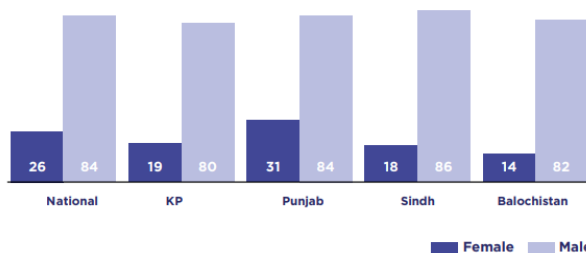
Gender:

Government of Pakistan "has taken significant measures in recent years to improve gender equality as pledged in the Constitution and the country's international commitments. Most notably, a sound legislative and policy framework has been established, including the enactment of many pro-women laws, policy reforms to enhance women's empowerment and participation, as well as a *National Gender Policy Framework (2022)*. Many good practices are being implemented, and success stories, small and big, can be found across the country."¹⁰

Pakistan is a signatory to various global policies and frameworks related to gender equality. These include the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)*, the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, and the *Sustainable Development Goal Agenda of 2030*. At the local level, Pakistan has adopted the *National Gender Policy Framework 2022*, *Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Ordinance 2020* and the *Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act* in all four provinces. "However, while laws for women's empowerment and protection from violence are in place at national and sub-national levels, implementation remains significantly weak – a fact also stressed in the Common Country Analysis (CCA) for Pakistan."¹¹

According to the *Global Gender Gap Index Report 2022*, Pakistan ranks 145/146 for economic participation and opportunity, 135/146 for educational attainment, 143/146 for health and survival, and 95/146 for political empowerment. Furthermore, Pakistan ranks 129 out of 140 countries on the *Rule of Law Index of the World Justice Project*.¹²

Figure 2.2: Refined LFPR of Workers (Aged 15-64) by Sex & Province



For example, the overall labour force participation rate (LFPR) of women in Pakistan is 21% which is significantly less than the global rate at 39%. At the national level, the refined LFPR of women (aged 15-64 years) is very low at 26% compared to 84% for men.¹³ While progress has been made over the years, it is slow and stagnating.

UN Women National Report on the Status of Women in Pakistan 2023

Figure 2 Refined LFPR of Workers (Aged 15-64) by Sex and Province

¹⁰ [summary_-nrsw-inl_final.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#)

¹¹ [strategic_note_final.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#)

¹² [strategic_note_final.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#)

¹³ [summary_-nrsw-inl_final.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#)

The *Annual Status of Education Report 2023* (ASER – Rural) covered 212,537 children (55% boys, 44% girls, and 1% transgender) aged 3-16 years old and represents the gender gap in the school context. While the enrolment gap is narrowing over time, 86% of children are enrolled in schools across Pakistan (rural), leaving 14% of children aged 6-16 out of school with 7.6% being girls and 0.4% being transgender children.¹⁴ Furthermore, girls and transgender children show lower learning levels in literacy and numeracy compared to boys.

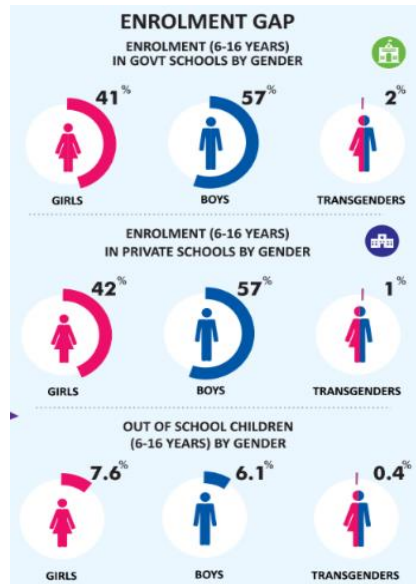


Figure 3: ASER 2023 (Rural) National Gender Gap Findings

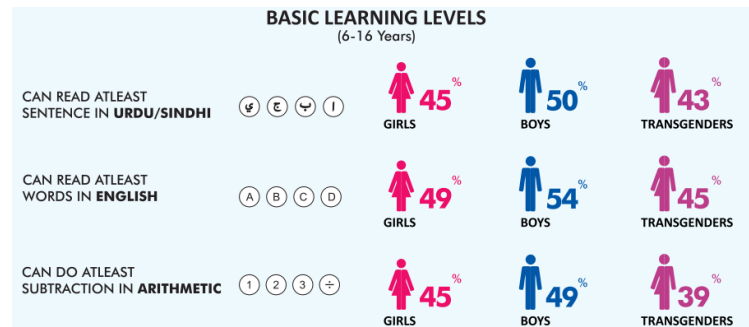


Figure 4: ASER 2023 (Rural) Gender-wise Learning Levels Findings

Moreover, while the transgender community in Pakistan has long faced discrimination and violence, it is notable to mention that Pakistan passed the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018* which is a landmark policy not only locally but in the global context as well.

This legislation provides the transgender community with various rights including the right to a passport, driver's license, the right to self-identification of gender with NADRA, access to medical facilities, and protection against harassment, violence and discrimination. However, the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018* was temporarily halted by the Federal Sharia Court in May 2023 due to religious injunctions. This decision led to a rise in cases of violence, abuse, and discrimination against the transgender community.¹⁵

To address the challenges facing the transgender community, UNDP's Strengthening the Electoral and Legislative Process has formulated *The National Strategic Framework for Transgender Persons Protection and Political Inclusion in Pakistan* which represents a crucial milestone in fostering inclusivity and safeguarding the rights of the transgender community. "By systematically addressing existing gaps, adopting a participatory approach, and implementing a comprehensive five-level strategic plan, this framework aims to establish a more inclusive and secure electoral environment, facilitating

¹⁴ [Gender Card 2023.cdr \(aseer.org\)](https://www.aseer.org/pakistan/2023/gender-card)

¹⁵ [Promoting Inclusion and Protection: Pakistan's National Strategic Framework for Transgender Persons | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/2023/05/20230501_Pakistan_National_Strategic_Framework_for_Transgender_Persons_Protection_and_Political_Inclusion_in_Pakistan.pdf)

meaningful participation in critical political decision-making for transgender individuals." ¹⁶

Adherents of Diverse Faiths and Ethnicities:

Unfortunately, data on religious minority children in the school context is scarce in Pakistan. However, local legislation is available to protect the rights of minorities and includes the *Protection of Minorities Act*, which prohibits discrimination against religious minorities and provides for the punishment of offenses committed against them. The act also established a *National Commission for Minorities' Rights*, tasked with monitoring the implementation of minority rights and recommending measures for their protection. While these legal provisions exist, their effective implementation remains a challenge. Discrimination and violence against minorities continue to persist, pointing to the need for greater awareness and enforcement of existing laws." ¹⁷

Minorities and marginalised groups face a myriad of challenges in Pakistan. Religious minorities such as Christians, Hindus, and Ahmadis deal with issues of social exclusion, limited access to education and employment opportunities as well as violence due to their religious beliefs including hate crimes, forced conversions, and blasphemy accusations leading to mob justice. Furthermore, ethnic minorities, including Balochis, Sindhis, and Pashtuns, also face discrimination, marginalisation and violence, limited access to resources, political representation, and economic opportunities. Moreover, women belonging to marginalised and minority groups face even more issues, as they are also subjected to gender-based violence and inequality. ¹⁸

Persons with Disabilities:

Table 1: Various Data Sets on Disabilities for Pakistan

Source	Population	Scope
1998 Census	3.2 million (2.54%)	Census included intellectual, mental and physical impairment
2011 National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER)	2.27 million (1.7%)	Data collected through door-to-door surveys in 27 million households
2011 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund	16 million (12%)	Data collected from 23 UCs in 7 districts comprising 78939 households.
World Report on Disability 2011 by WHO	17.8 million (13.4%)	Based on prevalence from World Health Survey 2002-2004.
2012 Study by Helping Hands for Relief and Development	5 million (2.65%)	Projections from the 1998 census across 199 districts from all 4 provinces
Moving from the Margins 2014. British Council Report	27 million (15%)	Projections using 15 percent global population of persons with disabilities
Population Census 2017, Government of Pakistan	Nearly 1 million (0.48%)	Registrations from the 6 th Population and Housing Census*
MICS 2018, Government of the Punjab	17.9%	Punjab-based Survey –Data collected from 35,482 children with functional difficulties between the ages of 5-17.

¹⁶ [Promoting Inclusion and Protection: Pakistan's National Strategic Framework for Transgender Persons | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](#)

¹⁷ [The Status and Rights of the Minorities and Marginalized Groups in Pakistan \(pakistanlawyer.com\)](#)

¹⁸ [The Status and Rights of the Minorities and Marginalized Groups in Pakistan \(pakistanlawyer.com\)](#)

Data on persons with disabilities (PWDs) remains limited and inconsistent as shown in Table 1. “Lack of data on disability remains a major obstacle to developing disability sensitive policies and programmes, not only in Pakistan but globally.”¹⁹

“One major challenge Pakistan faces in addressing the needs of OOSC is a poor understanding of the situation and needs of children with disabilities. The country has yet to define a holistic mechanism to protect the rights of persons with disabilities at the constitutional level.”²⁰ Currently, there is no standardised instrument for collecting data on disability in Pakistan.



Figure 5: Data on Schools with CWD Enrolment
Source:ASER 2021 National (Rural) Report

“In recognition of the limitations of binary questions, ASER Pakistan and Teaching Effectively All Children (TEACH) used a more functional approach to collecting data on disability by using the full set of questions from the Washington Group on Disability Statistics for ‘Child Functioning’ for children aged 5 – 16 years and 8 – 12 years respectively. These questions cover a range of functioning including: seeing, hearing, walking, self-care, understanding speech, remembering, controlling behaviour, focusing, accepting changes, making friends, being worried, and being sad.”²¹

According to the *ASER 2021 National (Rural) Report*, the breakdown of schools with CWD in the public and private school context, found that 18% of government schools and 13% of private schools had CWD enrolled. The TEACH survey found that many children with ‘mild’ disabilities are enrolled in schools, whereas children with moderate or severe disabilities are more likely to be out of school. It also notes that children with physical disabilities are more likely to be out of school.²²

¹⁹ [Annual Report editing setting.cdr \(opml.co.uk\)](#)

²⁰ [Situation Analysis Update 2020: Children in Pakistan.pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

²¹ [Mehr_Asma_Javed_and_Dr_Faisal_Bari.pdf \(aserpakistan.org\)](#)

²² [Situation Analysis Update 2020: Children in Pakistan.pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

Table 2: Province-Wise Breakdown of Disability

Province	Proportion of Schools Reporting Children with Disabilities	Proportion of Enrolled Students that Have A Disability
AJK	19.4%	0.23%
Balochistan	11.5%	0.28%
FATA	23.7%	0.42%
GB	28.4%	0.40%
KP	30.6%	0.53%
Punjab	20.8%	0.24%
Sindh	10.5%	0.11%
Total	20.4%	0.29%

Source: ASER 2019

Furthermore, Table 2 shows the province-wise breakdown of disability in Pakistan, taken from the *ASER 2019 Report*.²³

One milestone to note is that "As part of the Punjab Education Sector Programme II (PESP2), an Inclusive Education Strategy (IES) and Special Education Policy (SEP) have been formulated for the first time which clearly defines the Special Education Department (Punjab)'s responsibility towards children with mild and moderate conditions and SpED's responsibility towards children with severe and profound disabilities. These new documents set out a comprehensive policy framework combined with implementation plans."²⁴

Overall, the lack of data and poor implementation of relevant legislation continues to hinder the potential of progress towards a more inclusive society and education system.

²³ [Mehr_Asma_Javed_and_Dr_Faisal_Bari.pdf \(aserpakistan.org\)](#)

²⁴ [Annual Report editing setting.cdr \(opml.co.uk\)](#)

4 Introduction: Provincial Engagement Meetings

Provincial engagement meetings were held in Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit Baltistan from January-May 2024. The concept note and engagement framework were developed in October and finalised in December 2023.

The engagement model entailed that in each province/area, a day is dedicated to discussions with activists, academicians, and representatives from CSOs working for marginalised communities. Secondly, meetings with relevant government departments were planned to include school, social welfare, minority rights, and communications and works departments. Additionally, in Gilgit, *Fatima Minhas Inclusive School* was visited along with the *Rupani Foundation School* and *HANDS Independent Living Centre for PWDs*.

Objectives of the Engagement

The objectives of the meetings were to:

1. Get a nuanced perspective on the inclusion of marginalised communities in education.
2. Develop an inter-provincial network of activists and academicians called the Advocacy Group who will collaborate to achieve common goals during and beyond the life of DARE-RC.
3. Use the information and insights garnered from the meetings to inform the design of capacity strengthening sessions for producers and users of research, and for the DARE-RC consortium partners.
4. Generate informative video footage depicting the issues of marginalised communities to educate the audience of the DARE-RC digital platforms.

Theoretical Framework for Engagement Design

A theoretical framework was developed to guide the design of the provincial meetings. The framework of human development draws from the work of Abraham Maslow (*Hierarchy of Needs*)²⁵, Martha Nussbaum (*Ten Central Human Functional Capabilities*)²⁶ and the *COM-B Model* developed by Michie, Stralen, and Westholds. This framework would help capture the whole range of human development, from basic survival needs to self-esteem and self-actualisation goals.

The issues facing most marginalised groups included in the discussion do not pertain to limited access to education alone. For example, PWDs struggle with wider societal exclusion, transgender persons face rejection from their families and communities, and adherents of diverse religious faith often grow up amidst some degree of fear and humiliation. This societal milieu directly impacts the attitudes of the marginalised groups towards education institutions. The framework of human needs allows us to take all these factors into account and view inclusivity in education in a holistic manner.

²⁵ <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

²⁶ https://changingminds.org/explanations/needs/nussbaum_capabilities.html

Approach and Methodology

The following approach was utilised to gather information regarding perspectives on inclusivity:

1. Through relevant government department meetings across provinces whereby conversations were structured around a few broad and open-ended questions.
2. Provincial workshops comprising of full-day discussions with activists and CSOs representing marginalised groups.
 - a. Workshops featured an ice breaker activity requiring participants to express their opinions on issues faced by marginalised groups. The moderator gave a presentation on Inclusivity to frame the conversation which was followed by a structured discussion whereby participants identified top-ranking issues and recommendations. In a problem-solving group activity, participants used a set of limited resources to demonstrate their understanding of issues presented through four short case studies. The case studies served as 'a third thing'.²⁷ This is an indirect approach to achieve focus and intentionality since asking people abruptly to share something vulnerable may make them reluctant. Connecting while engaged in third things is a gentler way to communicate and get authentic responses.
 - b. Both meeting formats were designed to provide respondents a safe space to share their stories. From the stories shared across marginalised groups from different provinces, a narrative could be constructed. As adults are not finished products of cognitive development, the focus was on helping them create new meaning and share it with the group.²⁸ While hearing what others say, participants become more aware of their own beliefs, ideas, and observations. Hence, the focus was on listening deeply to what was shared and not on imposing a rigid structure through a questionnaire.

²⁷ Palmer, P. J. (2009). *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. Wiley

²⁸ Duckworth, E. (2001). *"Tell Me More": Listening to Learners Explain*. Teachers College Press

5 Provincial Discussions: What We Learnt

Demographic Breakdown of Workshop Participants

Provincial meetings were held in Quetta, Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore, and Gilgit. They were attended by a total of 73 activists and CSO representatives working with marginalised communities.

Table 3: Demography of Participants

PROVINCE/ AREA	BALUCHISTAN	KP	SINDH	PUNJAB	GB	TOTAL
TOTAL ATTENDANCE	16	14	15	15	13	73
FEMALES-MALES- TRANSGENDER	6-9-1	6-7-1	9-4-2	9-5-1	8-5-0	38-30-5
PWD ACTIVISTS	5	6	5	3	7	25
ACTIVISTS FROM DIVERSE FAITHS	2	2	5	3	1	12
TRANSGENDER RIGHTS ACTIVISTS	1	1	2	1	0	5
ACADEMICS/ RESEARCHERS	2	1	1	1	1	6
TEXTBOOK BOARD	2	0	2	2	0	6
GIRLS EDUCATION & EDUCATION IN GENERAL	4	2	1	4	3	11
OTHERS	1 GBV Protection Associate	1 Lawyer 1 Health Expert	0	0	1 Human Rights Expert	4

Note: Some participants have been counted twice, for example the transgender community representative in Quetta is also a Christian.

5.1 Pathways to Inclusivity

Provincial discussion meeting participants recommended ways to make the wider societal structure in general, and the education system in particular, more inclusive during an exercise to identify issues and suggest recommendations. The main areas that stood out are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Province-Wise Breakdown of Recommendations

FOCUS AREA	BALUCHISTAN	KP	SINDH	PUNJAB	GB	TOTAL
POLICY DEVELOPMENT	4	1	5	2	4	16
POLICY IMPLEMENTATION	1	1	1	6	1	10
CURRICULUM & TEXTBOOKS	11	6	5	0	2	24
TEACHERS & LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	2	7	6	0	2	17
ADVOCACY & AWARENESS-RAISING	3	4	4	5	3	19
ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY	0	1	0	0	3	5
INFRASTRUCTURE & URBAN PLANNING	1	6	1	1	6	15

A summary of key points from the ensuing discussion is presented in this section.

5.1.1 Policy Development and Implementation

The meeting participants from various CSOs recommended making the policy development process itself more inclusive as well as more stringent accountability measures to ensure effective policy implementation.

1. *Policy Development:* There is a need for evidence-based policy development and for the policy development process to be participatory and include stakeholders such as PWDs. Policy makers and implementing departments should also be sensitised to the need of quality and inclusive education. Furthermore, marginalised communities should be prioritised by policy makers following this sequence: PWDs, girls, transgender persons, adherents of diverse faiths, and ethnic minorities.
2. *Policy Implementation:* Policy should clearly state rules and regulations for inclusivity in education applicable at each level of schooling. There is a need for awareness of inclusive education policies and accountability protocols for effective implementation. For example, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) participants stressed the need for implementation of the provincial inclusivity policy included in the KP Education Sector Plan. Similarly, the rules of business for provincial Disability Acts should be developed to render them functional.
3. *Linking Policies to Beneficiaries:* Marginalised communities should be aware of policies that benefit them so they may claim their rights. PWDs should be reflected in the provincial youth policy. Safety concerns are a top priority for all marginalised children which is why Sindh recommended criminalising the bullying of marginalised communities.

4. *Quotas for PWDs and Religious Minorities:* It was stated that the quota for religious minorities should be increased in education institutions to accommodate Hindu, Christian, and Sikh children. Sindh and Punjab participants stressed the need for a quota for transgender children as well.

Individuals representing various marginalised communities are aware of the policies developed to cater to their needs and are also fully cognisant of the gaps in implementation which deter them from benefitting from the policies. Better coordination of policy developers with implementing bodies and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds will lead to meaningful policy development and implementation and may restore the faith of marginalised communities in the departments mandated to work in their interest.

5.1.2 Curriculum and Textbooks

The realities around curriculum and textbooks with regards to inclusivity was an area highlighted by a high number of participants from across the provinces.

1. *Inclusive Curriculum:* All provinces including GB (except Punjab) averred the need for one inclusive curriculum for all learners that includes strategies to address the varying needs of learners. For example, that there should be supplementary reading material to bridge learning gaps while teaching each learner at the right level as well as faith-based curricula for all religions, instead of the course on Ethics for all non-Muslim students. Furthermore, curriculum should be reviewed with input from all stakeholders.
2. *Inclusive Textbooks:* Participants shared that textbooks should celebrate the history, successes, and challenges of PWDs and transgender persons to nurture a friendly and compassionate attitude towards them. Also, that they should be available in Braille or be compatible with reading software so that visually impaired learners may access them. They should represent the true provincial culture and history.
3. *Making Textbooks Relevant:* Textbooks should encompass current socio-economic and technological knowledge, for example about professions with a growing demand due to CPEC.

Representatives of the Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab Textbook Boards attended the discussions. It is clear that amidst the multiple criteria for making quality textbooks, inclusivity is but one box for them to tick off. While we must celebrate small wins like the inclusion of adherents of diverse faiths in review committees in Punjab, we must look deeper to ask tough questions: Are the minority representatives participating fully in the review process? Is their voice given weightage by the authorities? How will this impact the quality of textbooks? Similarly, the inclusion of characters from diverse backgrounds in the textbooks is an important first step. Beyond that, it will be useful to reflect and brainstorm on how that inclusion can contribute towards the development of students as global citizens.

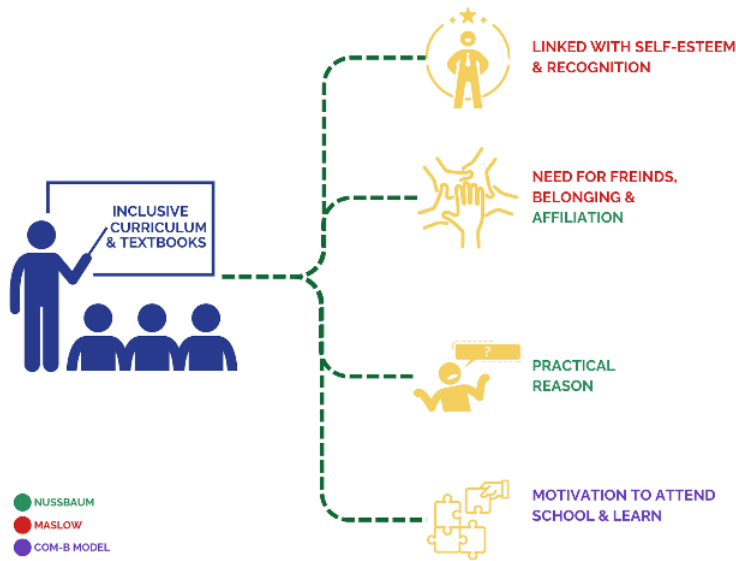


Figure 6: Inclusive Curriculum and Fulfilment of Human Needs

from marginalised communities not only accept them, but also celebrate their uniqueness, fulfilling each group's need for affiliation.

By 'Practical Reason' Nussbaum means being able to form a conception of what is good, having the liberty to follow one's conscience including the observances of a religion that one subscribes to. This need will be fulfilled for adherents of diverse faiths, when they are not relegated to a peripheral section of the class to study Ethics, rather the course for their specific religion is made available in the same way that Islamiyat is available to the Muslim majority students.

Secondly, this practice will open the Muslim majority students to compassionate acceptance of the other, allowing them to develop a sense of unity within diversity that may lead to the development of good citizenship.

Nussbaum's capabilities approach is centred around the notion of individual human dignity and this is what a truly inclusive curriculum and set of textbooks will help create. It will also guide the teacher's behaviour in a more nurturing direction, overriding some biases she may have.

5.1.3 Teachers and the Learning Environment

All provinces except Punjab considered the teaching force to be a priority area for breathing life in inclusive education, as they are the point of direct contact with learners.

Participants expressed that teacher capacity development is necessary to address the learning needs of CWDs and to sensitively integrate marginalised communities in a safe classroom environment. Overall, teachers should be trained in inclusive pedagogy, and to be flexible and accommodating. When possible, there should be teachers to teach religious studies to followers of all faiths. Furthermore, Special Education teachers should

The provincial workshops were designed on the human development framework. In the images, red indicates Maslow, green stands for Nussbaum, and purple for the COM-B Model. Inclusive curriculum and textbooks where learners from diverse backgrounds can see themselves represented, will help them develop a positive self-image and uplift their self-esteem. Seeing their identity acknowledged will fulfil their need for recognition. Such learning content will also help the class fellows of learners

be inducted after completing an internship programme to receive practical experience. The provision of Braille and Pakistan Sign Language (PSL) teachers should be ensured in schools with CWDs.

The teaching force is faced with multiple challenges and demands. The percentage of trained teachers in 2016-2017 was 75%, down from 85% in 2005.²⁹ To achieve the goal of universal primary education (UPE) by 2030, 50% more teachers need to be recruited.³⁰ The current teaching force has gaps in several skills, including subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, and strategies for teaching at the right level. While they are receiving trainings on inclusive education in Sindh and Punjab, they do not have specific knowledge to teach CWDs or non-Muslim children. In the context of the high priority status granted to education by the present government, it would be useful to explore how the demands of effective inclusive education may be integrated with other existing in-service training programmes in order to regularise such trainings and make them sustainable.

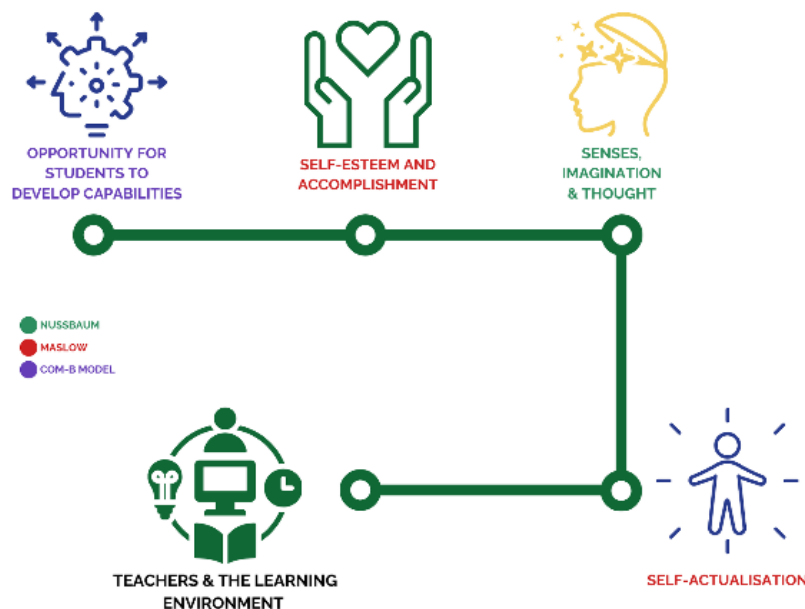


Figure 7: Inclusive Teaching Practices and the Fulfilment of Human Needs

Under the guidance of a trained and sensitised teacher equipped with an array of pedagogical skills for diverse learning styles, students may get an opportunity to develop their capabilities and realise their potential. A safe space for learning will further their self-esteem and the need to achieve their goals. In such a conducive environment, learners can use their senses, use reason, and their imagination for not just the learning of literacy and numeracy but also for artistic pursuits of their choice. It is interesting to note that a teacher can provide a range of needs, from the provision of a safe place to a sense of accomplishment and possibly even self-actualisation.

²⁹ [Pakistan | Education Statistics | CEIC \(ceicdata.com\)](https://ceicdata.com)

³⁰ Current Trends in the Status and Development Teachers,' October 2022, UNESCO Report

5.1.4 Access to Technology

This was listed as a priority area by participants from GB and KP only. It was particularly recommended for PWDs. For example, that the government should provide internet coverage to remote districts of GB to facilitate students. The absence of access to digital platforms is adding to the exclusion of all marginalised groups. It is an important pathway to ensuring inclusivity, thus it has been listed in this section even though only 4 out of 60 participants mentioned it in their comments as a priority area for facilitating inclusion.

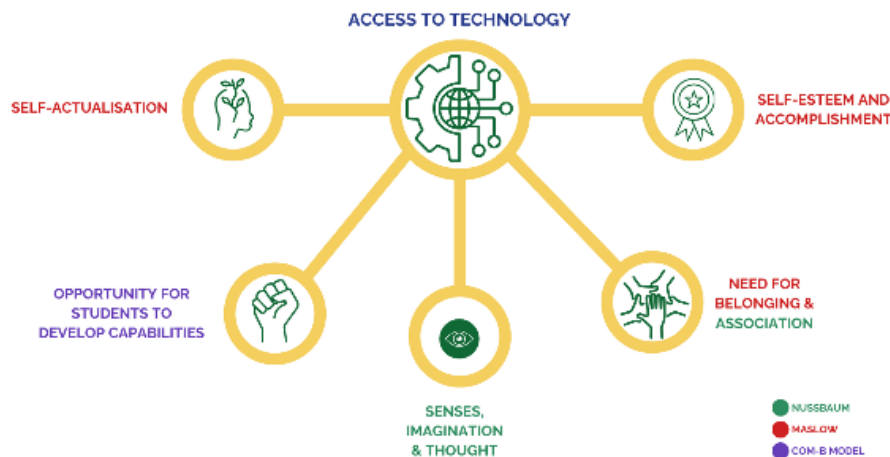


Figure 8: Access to Technology and the Fulfilment of Human Needs

Much like an effective teacher, technology too may present learners with opportunities to develop their talents and use their thoughts and imagination to learn new skills beyond academic learning. Through digital platforms, marginalised communities can build their own networks and get a sense of community through virtual interactions. Students may use this pathway to find community, employment and learning resources.

5.1.5 Provision of Infrastructure

Infrastructure was a top priority for participants from KP and GB, more so than other provinces. The need for ramps built according to the prescribed specifications, tactile pavements, modified furniture, and accessible toilets was stressed. Concern was also raised over the inaccessibility of services in Gilgit and Skardu for people living in remote parts of GB with a hardy terrain, due to insufficient infrastructural support.

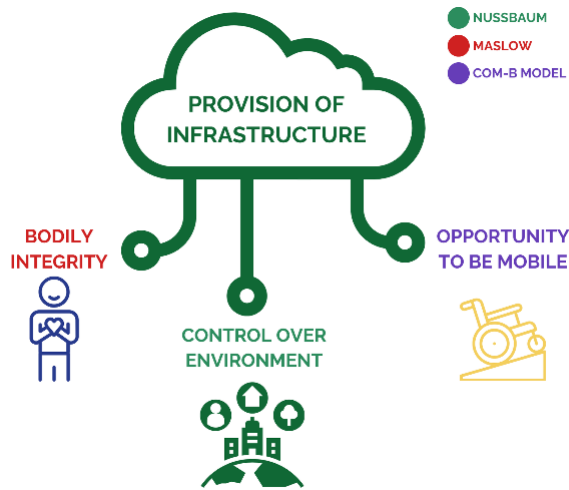


Figure 9: Accessible Infrastructure and the Fulfilment of Human Needs

Being able to approach and make use of one's surroundings in an empowered way will allow them to exercise control over their environment.

The gap between policy and implementation regarding accessible buildings for PWDs is wide yet not easy to address, since on paper the required regulations have been addressed. The assistive structures have not been made in compliance with regulations and are therefore not useable, for example in the case of ramps that are too steep.

Infrastructural support would facilitate PWDs, women and people living in remote areas. Once they are physically secure and able to move, they may take opportunities to realise their potential.

5.1.6 Advocacy and Awareness-Raising

Advocacy was listed as a priority area by almost an equal number of participants across the provinces and GB.

1. *The Target of Awareness Campaigns:* Awareness should be raised at the grassroots level through workshops, electronic media, digital platforms, radio, and by using local languages. The CSR branch of telecom providers can be engaged for efficient dissemination of information. The public should be educated about inclusive education so that the demand comes from the grassroots level to policy makers. Policy makers and the wider education sector must also be sensitised about marginalised groups.
2. *Marginalised Communities in Media:* Marginalised communities should be depicted in a positive, non-stereotypical light in the media.
3. *Awareness-Raising Amongst Parents:* Parents need to be sensitised to the concept of transgender children, CWDs, and gender equality. The goal of advocacy should be to change mindsets; when mindsets change, all else becomes possible.

Before they reach school going age, children from marginalised communities have experienced exclusion, apathy, and rejection from their families and communities. In school, the attitudes of peers and teachers further demotivate them. Participants shared rich anecdotal information on this topic, which is why a change in mindsets through advocacy was a priority across all provinces. While Pakistani society is characterised by close-knit extended families and neighbourhoods, the same closeness and lack of boundaries leads to harsh comments aimed at parents of CWDs, transgender children, and girls.

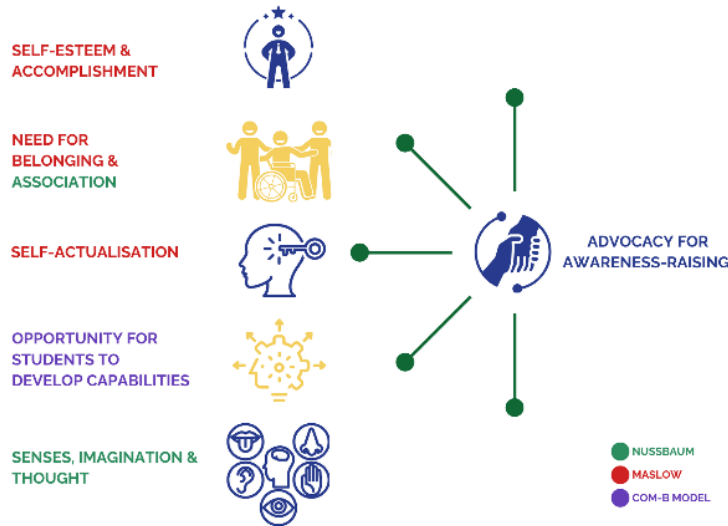


Figure 10: Impact of Effective Awareness- Raising Campaigns on the Fulfilment of Human Needs

at school and improve her self-esteem. The wider society will provide opportunities for the marginalised groups to hone their capabilities through access to learning resources such as skills development centres, for example.

Participants shared during the discussion how negative attitudes lie at the foundation of a compartmentalised society, thus policies and regulations may be there, but individuals unwilling to implement them find ways to trump the system. Advocacy campaigns will target these very attitudes that curtail the flow of positive change. The success of such an effort may broaden the scope of the lives of marginalised groups.

5.1.7 Group Activity: Design a Child's Future

The objective of this activity was to get participants to demonstrate their understanding and analysis of 4 basic case studies, presenting one issue: how to get the child into school. The focus was on the following case studies:

- 1) Male wheelchair user
- 2) Group of Christian children
- 3) Child labourer
- 4) Adolescent female dropout

The case studies were shared in Urdu and English. For KP, they were also translated into Pashto. This activity was added to the workshop design after the first workshop, held in Quetta (thus, it was not conducted in Quetta).

Since the recommended advocacy campaigns target policy makers, institutions, families of marginalised persons (such as girls and transgender persons), and the media, the impact of this pathway to inclusivity will be far-reaching in terms of the human development framework. Sensitised families will fulfil the child's need for belonging and association. Institutional heads who understand the need for inclusivity will enable the child to achieve her academic goals

DESIGN A CHILD FUTURE: GROUP ACTIVITY
SOLUTIONS OFFERED BY PARTICIPANTS TO SUPPORT:

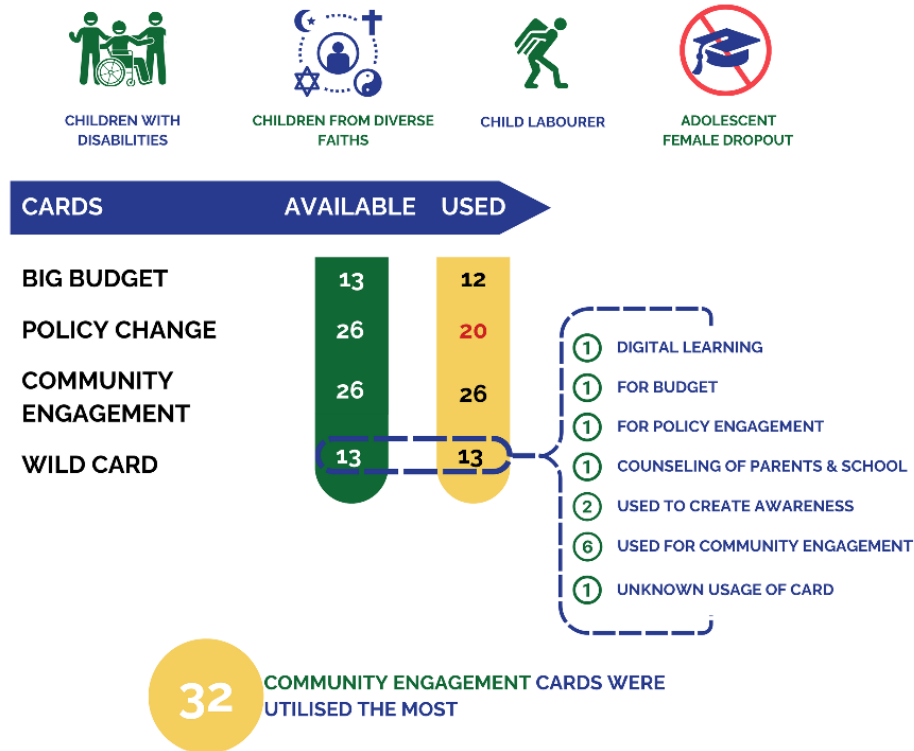


Figure 11: Improved Inclusivity for Marginalized Children: Perspectives of Provincial Discussion Participants

Each group was provided with a set of 6 cards to find ways to support the children in the 4 case studies to get into school. The cards included: **Policy Change** (2 cards), **Community Engagement** (2 cards), **Big Budget** (1 card), and a **Wild Card** (1 card) which could be used as any of the other cards or as something else that the group decided themselves.

There were some interesting findings from the way the groups from KP, Sindh, Punjab, and GB designed the children's future. For example, the Wild Card was used once by each of the 13 groups. It was used as a Community Engagement Card on 6 occasions, to create awareness twice, and once each for the counselling of parents and school administration, as an online art classes, for policy change, and for budget for transport respectively. One group did not mention how they used the Wild Card.

Contrary to expectation, the Wild Card was used for budgets by only 1 group. Most groups used it to harness the power of the community, to create awareness, or to counsel parents. This could indicate that participants have greater trust in the potential of communities to bring change than in big budgets or policy change. As Special Secretary Education Kulsoom Saqib said, "Everything boils down to how active the community is, how will you engage people; if a school is vibrant, you will see a community that is involved". Also, Chief Advisor SELD, Dr Fauzia Khan echoed the same thought, "Even if we make toilets, no one maintains them. Where the community is engaged, things are maintained better." Furthermore, Dr Sadya Salar, an STIs expert noted that community-led monitoring teams

can affect inclusivity for the transgender community using half the resources that projects consume.

Moreover, some groups did not use all their cards. The card that went unused in most cases was the Policy Change card. One way of looking at it is that the gulf between policy change and implementation has left many disillusioned to the extent that they now rely on communities as change catalysts instead. During subsequent meetings, newer iterations of this activity may be developed to gain more insight into participants' rationale for the problem-solving choices they made.

For the template for 'Design a Child's Future', refer to Annex A.

5.2 Perspectives of Various Marginalised Groups

Through the provincial engagement, information on the issues facing each marginalised group, the facilities provided to them, and recommendations on these matters was garnered. This was done through a day-long structured discussion with CSOs, activists, and academics working with PWDs, girls, transgender persons, and adherents of diverse faiths. Secondly, meetings with relevant government departments provided insights into their policies and perspectives. These included the Social Welfare Departments, Minority Rights Departments, Women Development Departments, School Education Departments, and Urban Planning Departments. This section summarises the information gathered from these engagement discussions with information organised according to each major marginalised group.

Participants from all discussion meetings agreed that inclusive education that teaches the majority group to coexist with the marginalised groups, will benefit both the majority groups and the minorities. The aim of education, they said, is to learn how to live in society and not just get a degree; that aim can be achieved through a focus on inclusive education so children see and respect other children who are differently-abled or belong to diverse faiths. A participant from Gilgit said that we take a limited view of the objectives of education, ignoring its broader objectives to create global citizens with 21st century skills.

Overall, the government department meetings gave an overview of the policies and systems in place as well as the facilities being provided to the concerned groups. The discussion meetings and workshops, on the other hand, provided a more nuanced view of the experience of individuals and groups on the receiving end of the policies and systems, their response to the wider societal structures that marginalise them in the first place, and their struggles to stay relevant amidst the cross currents of barriers and facilitators.



Taken During DARE-RC Provincial Engagement Discussion on Inclusivity, February 2024, Karachi

"We need special spaces for each marginalised community, to make up for the exclusion they have suffered in the last 75 years." *Jai Prakash Moorani, Editor Daily Ibrat, Hyderabad*

5.2.1 Persons with Disabilities

Meetings were held with Social Welfare Departments in KP and GB, Punjab Welfare Trust for the Disabled (under the Social Welfare Department), and with the Department for the Empowerment of Persons with Disability (DEPD), Sindh. PWD activists and CSOs participated in the day-long discussion across these provinces as well. There was representation from CSOs working with visual impairment, speech impairment, mobility issues, Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, and speech therapy. The participants from across provinces were part of a functional network. As such, this was a strong and articulate group.



Taken During DARE-RC Provincial Engagement Discussion on Inclusivity, February 2024, Karachi

Societal Response to PWDs

The key challenges to inclusion faced by PWDs were several, starting from a lack of acceptance by their families. CWDs enter into a universe where the parents are likely to prefer other children who can offer more support as they grow older, a community that blames the parents for giving birth to a disabled child (sometimes citing it to be a punishment from God), and a state that gives little thought to their well-being. A participant shared his thoughts on parental and societal attitudes towards PWDs:

"I face criticism from strangers for what they perceive as my children misbehaving when we take our autistic children out to the mall. To avoid this harsh treatment, families often keep their CWDs cloistered at home." *CSO representative, PWD, father of autistic children, Quetta*

Another aspect of parental denial is that they dedicate time and resources to 'fix' the child's condition, losing the crucial first few years of the child's life where she could, for example, be initiated in PSL or other strategies to manage the disability. Religious interventions are also tried to reverse the child's disability. This stems from a dearth of information about the child's condition, a lack of agency to seek help from experts, and an overall emotional rather than a rational response to the situation.

The need to protect CWDs is further accentuated in the case of women with disabilities (WWDs), leading to greater isolation. For example, it is common for WWDs to attend skills development trainings at the Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Sindh, accompanied by family members. There are significant delays in the academic achievements of WWDs due to the family's reluctance to allow them out of the house. This extra care stifles their capabilities and limits their access to opportunities for personal growth.

PWDs reported feelings of exclusion due to unthinking comments and questions from people around them.

"People are amazed when we are able to finish the smallest of tasks, such as use a cellular phone. This makes me feel like an alien." *PWD Activist, visually impaired, Quetta*

Infrastructure development priorities may also lead to the exclusion of PWDs. For example, while ramps have been added to banks and some education institutions due to government regulations, these are mostly too steep and thus risky for a wheelchair user to access them. Similarly, escalators in Lahore Metro stations usually remain switched off. Furthermore, the tactile pavement in the Peshawar Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System is cordoned off and cannot be accessed by the visually impaired. Thus, the attempts at making urban development accessible for PWDs are at an initial stage with gaps between planning and implementation.

"Inclusion of PWDs is made possible by ensuring mobility and communication. No disability is a barrier if these two are provided in the form of accessible urban structures and PSL in the case of hearing impairment." *CEO of CSO, Disability Rights Activist, Lahore*

Employment opportunities for PWDs are often created through the personal good will of government officials. For example, the KP Social Welfare Department official, liaised with a chain of pharmacies to get 20 hearing impaired youth employed. Similarly, in Karachi, the Director General of the Arts Council designated a space for PWDs to display their

handicrafts. While this approach yields immediate results, once these officials get transferred, their initiatives are not sustained. A systemic intervention will be more effective in the long term and will also benefit PWDs from rural or marginalised areas.

PWDs and Access to Education

To improve CWDs access to education, mainstreaming was recommended by most activists and officials. Teacher preparedness, flexible approach of administration, and required infrastructural facilities are prerequisites to make schools disability friendly. Studying alongside CWDs may make other children compassionate and sensitive. As a first step, SELD has facilitated adding PSL on the inside cover of textbooks to initiate all learners into the world of differently-abled persons.

Setting up Special Education schools for a small number of students is not a practical option and currently these education centres and schools are scattered at vast distances. In Punjab, on average, mainstream schools are under 1 km away from the homes of children, while Special Education schools are between 7-15 km away, rendering them practically inaccessible. In this scenario, mainstreaming appears to be a more viable option.

The first hurdle to mainstreaming are the biases of teachers, school administrations, and the parents of other students. For example, some head teachers believe that a wheelchair user must be intellectually challenged. They exclude CWDs from co-curricular activities, assuming that they may not have the capacity to participate. CWDs are often unable to continue mainstream education beyond primary grades since the senior classes are on the first floor, yet relocating the class for CWD with mobility issues to the ground floor may solve this problem. In reality, however, both public and private schools resist admitting CWDs.

“When asked, school heads say they feel affection towards CWDs. Yet, they are averse to accommodating even a single such child in their schools.” *Disability Rights Activist, PWD, Karachi*

In Punjab, Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Education Development (QAED), and the SELD in Sindh, have teacher trainings on Inclusive Education which indicates an interest in making education inclusive at the government level. However, to make schools truly inclusive, particularly in the case of hearing and visual impairment, teachers have to be trained in PSL and Braille.

Overall, it is ideal for CWDs to study in mainstream schools and not in isolated Special Education schools for a range of reasons. Academically they are not challenged enough, as individualised education plans are not used by the Special Education teachers. Students are merely kept engaged for a few hours resulting in students being ill-prepared to cope with studies in mainstream schools. CWDs often lack the skills to cope in the outside world since they have no experience of dealing with peers who don't have disabilities.

5.2.2 Women

After meetings with various provincial government departments and a day-long structured discussion with academic scholars, activists, and CSO representatives, some insight was gained with regards to the gender landscape in the educational context across Pakistan.

In comparison to exclusion faced by other marginalised groups such as PWDs and transgenders (TGs), at both the school level and at a wider societal level, the issues faced by girls and women seemed less daunting. Public sector schools, low-cost private schools, and community-based non-formal education centres all offer girls access to education. However, safety concerns for girls are an impediment in their education. Also, cultural practices such as early marriage limit girls' academic options beyond primary or middle grades. For example, due to safety concerns regarding girls in interior Balochistan, even a separate shift for girls in a boys' school is considered culturally inappropriate and unsafe. Nonetheless, for parents who are willing to send girls to school, there are relatively fewer challenges systemically. Parental and cultural attitudes towards girls' education are shifting across provinces.

"Due to the work of NGOs in raising awareness, parental attitudes towards girls' education are shifting. The library in Quetta and girls' hostels are all filled to capacity with girls getting an education." *Balochistan Women Development Department Official, Quetta*

A few factors also indirectly support girls' education. For example, A Quetta participant shared that since the majority of teachers are females, they prefer their female students to male students. Also, due to financial constraints, parents have to engage their sons in child labour at an earlier age than the age when girls are to be married.

5.2.3 Transgender Persons

Providing education to transgender children is a complex issue due to societal apathy, rejection, and in some cases aggression towards this group. This is the only group of children who are predominantly disowned by their biological parents.

"Belongingness comes where you can be yourself. Transgenders don't seem to belong at home, or at school. There is an environment-based dysphoria." *Dr Sadya Salar, Sexually Transmitted Illnesses Specialist, Khwaja Sira Society, Lahore*



Transgender Representative at DARE-RC Provincial Engagement Discussion, January 2024, Quetta

Additionally, transgender children compete with girls and boys, for a share in the limited resources available to government departments and their access to schooling is given less priority than the same for girls and boys. The situation is further compounded by the lack of data on the transgender population and under-reporting of their numbers in the existing data.

Attitudes Towards Transgenders

"I was harassed on a regular basis during my schooling, even by my teachers at the university level. Unfortunately, there was no reporting mechanism, and I was advised to maintain silence for the sake of the reputation of the university." *Police Officer, transgender person, Quetta*

"We cannot offer transport to TG learners and not offer the same to our girl students." *Punjab School Education Department Official, Lahore*

There is a lack of consensus on a clear course of action for this group. For example, there was an inconclusive debate around whether transgender children should attend mainstream schools or exclusive ones. The provision of safe learning spaces is a core challenge for them. While Punjab School Education Department has exclusive schools for transgenders in Multan, D.G. Khan, and Lahore, designating a school exclusively to TGs adds to their visibility and raises concerns about risks of attacks from extremist groups. A Minority Rights Department official from the same province highlighted another complexity to be mindful of: there are gender-based variations within the transgender community, who are sometimes unwilling to study together. (Some have a stronger male identity while others are more feminine). Providing community-based schooling in transgender neighbourhoods is also a practical option.

Policies for boys' and girls' education have limited relevance to the issues of transgenders. These children have to start earning their own livelihoods from a young age as many work as 'entertainers' in late night functions and rest in the morning hours. Thus, they may prefer to attend schools in the afternoon. In addition, they can continue schooling only if they are offered scholarships that match their earnings, since they have to support themselves financially.

It is clear from this discussion that the transgender community faces unsurpassed challenges as members of society and as learners. Updated and relevant data on their numbers, education status, and needs will further add legitimacy to their movement. Perhaps the next generation of transgender individuals may have a wider range of employment opportunities open to them, based on the education and skills that they are facilitated in acquiring, by CSOs, the government, and society at large.

5.2.4 Adherents of Diverse Faiths

The Inclusivity team held meetings with Minority Rights Departments in Quetta, Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore, and Gilgit. The discussion with CSOs and activists included representatives from Christian, Hindu, and Sikh communities with some participants from different sects of Islam.



Sikh Representative at DARE-RC Provincial Engagement Discussion on Inclusivity, January 2024, Quetta

Overall, the government officials expressed satisfaction with the status of religious minorities in their province. Most department representatives claimed their province to have the most inclusive practices, in comparison to other provinces. This indicates the politicisation of the issue of religious minorities, leading to a seeming reluctance to share issues and insights. Even provinces with a weak record of religious tolerance and a high occurrence of mob violence against those accused of blasphemy, maintained this stance. In comparison, the problems faced by PWDs, for example, were shared by the concerned officials with more candour, as that is a less politically charged area.

Self-Perceptions around Religious Tolerance

"Religious minorities in Balochistan are not marginalised." *Minority Rights Department Official, Quetta*

"Balochistan has a rich, inclusive culture where Hindus and Muslims are friends, Hindus are entrusted by Muslims to keep their belongings, and both attend each other's funeral ceremonies." *Balochistan Textbook Board Representative, Quetta*

"Cases of forced conversions and marriages of Hindu girls are misrepresented in the media. Mostly girls willingly marry Muslim boys. There is no fact-finding, there should be research to ascertain facts." *Sindh Minority Rights Department Official, Karachi*

"There are no reported forced conversions or marriages in KP; Kalash people convert of their own will." *KP Minority Rights Department, Peshawar*

"Blasphemy cases are now based on Muslims accusing other Muslims; accusing followers of other faiths is a declining trend." *Punjab Minority Rights Department Official, Lahore*

On the other hand, the input from CSOs and activists presented a nuanced view of reality, acknowledging both the progress made in this regards and the problems that still persist. While this group highlighted some systemic shortcomings, they focused more on negative attitudes that corroded the confidence and motivation of children from diverse faiths to attend school.

Attitudes that Hinder Diversity

"I wanted to study Islamic Studies, yet my teacher barred me from taking the class with my Muslim friends." *Police Officer, Transgender rights activist, Quetta*

"My class fellows would turn their gaze towards me when the lesson mentioned Hindus. It was common for teachers to object to my turban or bangle." *Sikh Rights Activist, Quetta*

"The marks of a Christian ace student were deducted erroneously as she did not recite the Quran. The error was admitted but not rectified." *Community Mobiliser, Rahim Yar Khan*

"Even when non-Muslims are integrated, Muslims harbour feelings of superiority." *Balochistan Textbook Board Representative, Quetta*

Provinces are working to improve the status of their religious minorities. There are budgetary allocations in all provinces to support the education scholarships, skills development, health services, religious practices, and marriage ceremonies of the adherents of diverse faiths. Though not always filled, there are employment quotas for non-Muslims. Furthermore, Sindh has a budget head for natural calamities, such as the burning of houses in Tharparkar, during the windy season. There is a non-Muslim accidental death compensation fund. However, in GB, there are relatively fewer facilities as there is a small non-Muslim population, estimated at 3-5%.

Some policy changes that were reported as improvements pertain to removing derogatory practices. For example, all provinces have removed the mention of Christians from job advertisements for sanitary workers which was previously practiced. It is debatable whether this is progress, or an action that restores dignity to Christians, which should never have been challenged in the first place.

In Sindh, non-Muslim students taking the National Testing Service (NTS) test do not have to appear in the Islamic Studies exam anymore as they previously did. Also, examination boards do not schedule papers on the days of Hindu festivals of Holi and Diwali. Sindh has the highest concentration of Hindu population in Pakistan; 8.7% of the population of Sindh are Hindus. Another such issue is the right of children to study the faith they follow. Non-Muslim students have to study Ethics or Islamic Studies. The religion-specific books have been developed, but have not yet been notified for use in schools.

The provincial textbook boards have been moving towards better inclusivity through the removal of hate material, representation of persons of diverse faiths in the lessons, and making the textbook development process more inclusive. Punjab Textbook Board review committees now include Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs. Sindh textbooks mention marginalised groups and celebrate heroes like Iqbal Masih (Christian activist). An activist from Lahore made a fine point: books mention diverse cultures and religions in isolation. They do not model how to interact with people from different religions. Beyond mentioning marginalised groups, the need is for innovative depictions that make them relevant and relatable to all textbook users.

Overall, it appears that there is little recognition at the government level of the need to address the attitudinal barricades, through advocacy and a national dialogue, on the need for inclusivity or on engaging with the religious right wing to prepare ground for more humane treatment of Pakistanis who adhere to faiths other than Islam.

5.2.5 Other Forms of Exclusion

In addition to gender, religion and disability, there are other forms of exclusion based on language, ethnicity, and immigrant/refugee status. There are groups who are excluded even from the definition of inclusivity itself.

Afghan refugee children face several challenges in education especially when documents are required to appear in exams or to seek admission in higher education institutions. Some study under the Afghan Board as they cannot present their father's CNIC, a requirement for appearing in matric exams. Participants in Quetta estimated that only 2-3% of refugee children are able to continue with their education due to these systemic hurdles.

Like other marginalised groups, the refugee community also faces attitudes detrimental to their development. In some projects in Balochistan, where host communities and refugees were integrated in schools, the former did not mingle with their Afghan class fellows, negatively impacting the learning and motivation of the latter group. They live amidst a strong bias from their teachers and other students who think that they are destined to become only rag pickers. However, in KP, Afghan refugee children are better integrated. Special Secretary Education KP said that 64,000 Afghan children are enrolled in mainstream schools and are given some relaxation in regulations so they may appear in their matriculation exams.

Language exclusion and learning in a language other than the mother tongue is also a highly debated issue, especially in the context of children from rural areas whose mother language is other than Urdu. The medium of instruction in schools is Urdu and/or English; both are foreign languages for children who speak, for example, Punjabi or Seraiki at home.

Overall, schools run on a system that demands compliance from learners; the better they adhere to the prescribed mould, the more successful they are considered to be. The assessment system also rewards those who can reproduce what they have learnt, rather than present their own views and analyses.



Taken During DARE-RC Provincial Engagement Discussion on Inclusivity, May 2024, Peshawar

6 Way Forward

6.1 Advocacy Group for Policy Engagement

An Advocacy Group for Inclusivity will be supported by DARE-RC. It will comprise participants identified from the provincial workshops and stakeholder meetings. The group will include representation from all marginalised communities, be a balanced blend of males and females, and include activists working at the grassroots level as well as academics.

The role of this group will be solidified in the coming months. The broader objectives include policy engagement at the provincial level, interactions with government departments and PIE, to ensure inclusivity of all groups in the organisation's work. The role of the group will be in the overall DARE-RC engagement plan based on research outcomes and policy papers produced by DARE-RC and will be in synch with policy engagement.

The *Pathways to Inclusivity* section of this report records some rich thoughts shared by the participants during the provincial meetings which may provide a good starting point for further thinking and sharing with policy makers. The group will be involved during the two planned DARE-RC summits. Other interactions will include online sessions with the Inclusivity Lead and expert guests as well as email exchanges. This network, once formed, is expected to continue to contribute to the policy uptake of recommendations emerging out of DARE-RC research evidence and policy papers.

6.2 Capacity Strengthening

The Inclusivity Team will conduct sessions on inclusivity for multiple groups and audiences. The training content will be aligned to the audience profile. It will also evolve with the experience and insights garnered from each session. Thus, there will be a flow of information and anecdotal insights across the sessions that will guide both the discussion and amendments in the training session design.

The sessions will be structured around the following key points:

- Understanding the perspectives of marginalised communities regarding inclusivity in education. The findings from the provincial engagement will be shared to create in-depth awareness.
- Becoming aware of our own experience of inclusivity. Opportunities will be provided so that participants may become aware of their own biases towards others as well as hone in on their own experience of being excluded.
- Embedding inclusivity in the work that they are doing. Each group will reflect on and plan pathways to make their specific area of work more inclusive.

The sessions will cater to the following groups:

- Users and producers of research who will be trained during PIE workshops as well as in trainings conducted in provincial hubs
- Attendees at DARE-RC summits
- DARE-RC consortium partners
- New entrants in the civil service, who will go on to become users of research and will be trained at the National Institute of Management (NIMS)

Using the Inclusivity Checklist, the Inclusivity Lead will provide feedback on training sessions conducted by the CS team. Through collaborative trouble shooting, the Capacity Strengthening (CS) and Inclusivity Teams will strategise to resolve recurring challenges to Inclusivity.

6.3 Policy Engagement

The Inclusivity Lead will be involved at the Policy Engagement level. Research products will be reviewed in order to distil findings relevant to Inclusivity which will inform the policy dialogue.

6.4 Communication

The video content from the provincial engagement has been edited into short clips to be uploaded on the DARE-RC website, curated under theme-wise tabs, so that users may easily access clips on topics of their interest. The clips have been carefully edited from the event footage and focus on topics such as attitudinal issues, systemic challenges, textbooks and teachers, inclusive urban development, policy development, and policy implementation. Relevant content will also be used in the Capacity Strengthening sessions to sensitise, inform, and inspire the participants.

Using the Inclusivity Checklist, it will be ensured that all Communication products are inclusive.

"If our problems are unique in Pakistan, so are our energies." *Peter Jacobs, CSJ, Lahore*

Annex A: Group Activity Template

Case Studies: Design a Child's Future

How will Nomi get an education?

Nomi is an eight-year-old boy. He has never been to school. He uses a wheelchair due to a spinal cord injury that he got during floods. Nomi can count and has Urdu vocabulary of a 5-year-old and English vocabulary of a 4 year old. He has picked some reading skills by using his mobile phone to watch videos and play games.



Nomi avoids people other than his family because he has mostly lived indoors, away from the community. He feels uneasy around others and is irritated by their reactions to his condition. His parents want to send him to school. They cannot send him because:

1. **You have to climb stairs to reach the school.**
2. **The school wants to admit him in preschool because he can't write much.**

No school for these 11 children?

There is a Christian community on the outskirts of Karachi. It has about 5-6 families with 11 children of primary school age (Ages between 5-12). About 4 of the children are very intelligent and the others have average intelligence. They have some reading skills in Urdu and English.



It is difficult for the parents to send them to school because:

1. **The nearest public school is 2 KM away.**
2. **The parents are afraid that teachers and other children may treat them badly because of their faith. (One of the parents has done his matric and he remembers being treated with hate and ridicule).**

Ahmed's dilemma

Ahmed is 12 years old. He is learning mobile repair work from an expert in his *mohallah*. He can read a little English and Urdu. He wants to go to school but he also wants to learn the work to be able to earn money.



Ahmed cannot go to school because:

1. **The school timings clash with his work hours**
2. **He is too mature for his age to get along with his class fellows.**
3. **The learning content seems irrelevant to him.**

Any school for Annie?

Annie has turned 15. She finished class 8th and then she couldn't continue with education. Annie likes to draw and paint. Her mother keeps telling her to learn stitching and embroidery instead. She got A grade in English in class 8th but got C and D in other subjects.



She cannot go to school because:

1. **The secondary school is 3 kms away. Her family will never send her alone.**
2. **Her parents want her to get married soon.**
3. **She herself is also not very interested in school. She only likes Art activities.**



Annex B: List of Government Officials

Government of KP, Peshawar
Haider Jan Planning Officer, Minority Affairs Department
Qayyum Khan Deputy Director, Social Welfare Department
Asfandyar Khattak Special Secretary, Elementary and Secondary Education Department
Mr. Ameer Khan Chief Infrastructure, Planning and Development Department
Government of GB, Gilgit
Mujahid Shah Deputy Director, Social Welfare Department
Basharat Ullah Chief Engineer, Communication and Works Department
Basharat Director, Special Education Department
Abid Ali Naeem Deputy Director (Planning), Elementary and Secondary Education Department
Ahmad Ali Assistant Director, Human Rights Department
Government of Punjab, Lahore
Kulsoom Saqib Special Secretary, School Education Department
Muhammad Yousuf Deputy Director, Human Rights and Minorities Affairs Department
Dr Izhar-ul-Haq Hashmi Director Programmes, Punjab Welfare Trust for The Disabled
Government of Sindh, Karachi
Dr Fauzia Khan Special Secretary/Chief Advisor, School Education and Literacy Department
Farman Ali Regional Director, Special Education Department
Sanjay Raja Minority Affair Department

Government of Balochistan, Quetta
Jahan Ara Tabassum Deputy Secretary, Women Development Department
Muhammad Dawood Bazai , Provincial Secretary, Minority Affairs Department

Annex C: List of Discussion Participants

Quetta		
	Name	Designation and Organisation
1	Nasrullah Shehvani	Pakistan Association of Blind Balochistan, Joint Secretary
2	Hafiz Sheraz	PAB, Executive member
3	Niamatullah	PAB, Executive member
4	Bilal Durrani	Socio Pak, M & E Officer
5	Rubina Anwar	DANESH, CEO
6	Ishrat	DANESH
7	Mrs. Aosaf Latif	Balochistan Textbook Board, Senior Subject Specialist
8	Asma Maladad	DANESH, CBP Associate
9	Dr Saubia Ramzan	Professor Institute of Management Sciences, University of Balochistan
10	Fareed Buzdar	Balochistan Textbook Board, Subject Specialist
11	Rizwan Ahmed	DANESH, GBV Protection Associate
12	Saima Iqbal	Inception, core team member
13	Sardar Jasbir. G. Singh	Chairperson Minorities, Sikh, Hindu. Member Minorities Commission Balochistan
14	Abishay Basharat	Women and Juvenile Facilitation Centre
15	Professor Dr Alia	Chairperson Edu. Dept. Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's Uni.
16	Riaz Baloch	The Special Ones, CEO

Karachi		
	Name	Designation and Organisation
1	Jai Prakash Moorani	Daily Ibrat, Hyderabad
2	Dr Mohsin Naqvi	Professor at SZABIST
3	Rabia Jamali	Research Officer, Sindh Textbook Board
4	Naresh Kumar	Assistant Director, Sindh Textbook Board
5	Attia Bhutto	Assistant Professor, Education Department
6	Fatima Jafri	Education Coordinator, Disabled Welfare Organisation
7	Javeria Hanif	C.P, PLIC

8	Lal Muhammad	HANDS ILC Hyderabad Manager
9	Nisar Ali	ILC/ Attendant
10	Munazza Mohsin	Programme Manager HANDS
11	Satesh Kumar	Campaignistan
12	Sagar Malhi	Photographer
13	Zehrish Khanzadi	Project Manager, Gender Interactive Alliance
14	Shella Julius	Transgender Rights Activist
15	Sadaf Mateen	The Circle, CEO and Chief SLP
16	Zaynab Abedin Jawad	Head of Resource Mobilization, KDSP
17	Sister Elizabeth Niamat	St. Joseph's College
18	Sister Elizabeth Philip	St. Joseph's School

Lahore		
	Name	Designation and Organisation
1	Zahida Khan (Multan)	CEO PHDF
2	Zubaida Razzaq (Multan)	Coordinator Trust Project
3	Dr Sadya Salar	STI Specialist KSS
4	Aqeel Bashir (RYK)	Project Coordinator REED Society
5	Zahida Qureshi (Multan)	President Society for Special Persons
6	Sanaa Ahmed	Programme Manager, SAHE
7	Dr Tayyaba Ashraf	Deputy Director Curriculum Wing, PCTB, Lahore
8	Karam Hussain	Deputy Director Curriculum Wing, PCTB
9	Humera	Provincial Coordinator
10	Shafiq ur Rahman	Milestone
11	Ashar Niaz	Attendant Milestone
12	Zainab	CSJ
13	Iqra Tabassum	CSJ Project Officer
14	Peter Jacob	ED CSJ
15	Abbas Rashid	ED SAHE

Peshawar		
	Name	Designation and Organisation
1	Dr Anoosh Khan	Professor/ Chair/Dept. of Gender Studies, University of Peshawar

2	Nasim Riaz	Safar Welfare Organisation
3	Ihsanullah	CEO SPDA
4	Shehla Bibi	CEO PMWD
5	Sadia Sajid Awan	CEO RISE Welfare Organization, Principal Rise School for Inclusive Education, Abbottabad
6	Dr Komal Khan	CEO, Created Opportunities
7	Muzammil Islam	Programme Advisor Education, AAR Japan
8	Sajid Qayyum Khan	MD Rise, School for Inclusive Education
9	Hassan Farooq	Director Academic, Iqra Dar-ul-Quran, Hayatabad Peshawar
10	Fauzia Ali	Programme Coordinator, Shirkat Gah
11	Muhammad Ayub	Advocate
12	Dr Ateeq-ur-Rehman	Executive Member, Special Life Foundation
13	Heera	Transgender Activist, HIV AIDS awareness
14	Javed Khan	General Secretary SPDA

Gilgit		
1	Tahira Sher Ali	CEO and Principal, Mehnaz Fatima Foundation
2	Qurataulain	Coordinator, Rehab Mehnaz Fatima Foundation
3	Syed Munir Kazmi	Vice Chairman, VWF
4	Israruddin	Provincial Coordinator HRCP
5	Dr Asif Khan	Dean Faculty of Art and Humanities, Karakoram University
6	Ambreen Shaheen	Vice President, Parbat Welfare
7	Farman Nisa	Programme Manager Education and ECD, AKRSP
8	Sadaf Sher Baz	Manager Academics and Careers, CEENA Health and Welfare Services
9	Amjad Nadeem	Independent Living Center Coordinator
10	Tasneem Zulfiqar	CEO, Dar-ul-Hunar Foundation
11	Zahra Khatoon	Coordinator, Dar-ul-Hunar Foundation
12	Saira Nisar	Student, BMP